WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Gas Tragedy in the National Fertilizer Ltd., Panipat

*45. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA :
DR. BAPU KALDATE :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of persons were killed and many taken ill due to leakage of the deadly ammonia gas at the National Fertilizers Limited Plant at Panipat;

(b) whether Government have instituted any enquiry into the accident;

(c) if so, the findings thereof;

(d) whether any responsibility has been fixed; and if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the details of the compensation paid by Government to the victims and the action taken to avoid recurrence of such incidents in future ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI CHINTA MOHAN) : (a) Ten persons died in the Panipat Plant of the National Fertilisers Ltd. (NFL) on 26-8-1992 due to leakage of ammonia gas while repair work was being undertaken to change the safety valve of one of the ammonia feed pumps. Besides, eleven other persons also received injuries who have recovered after treatment.

(b) to (d) An enquiry committee headed by an outside expert was constituted by NFL to go into the causes of the accident, fixation of responsibility, if any, review of safety procedures followed in the unit and to recommend remedial measures. In its report, the enquiry committee has held that the accident was on account of failure of a component of a suction valve of Ammonia Pump. Since the personnel directly concerned, including the officer who had issued the safety permit authorising the work, also perished in the accident, the enquiry committee has observed that fixing of responsibility is not possible. The committee has suggested a number of short-term and long-term measures for avoiding such mishaps.

(e) M/s NFL, which is a public sector undertaking, has made *ex-gratia* payment of Rs. 25,000/- to the dependents of each deceased employee and Rs. 10,000/- each to the injured. The entire expenses on medical treatment of the injured amounting to Rs. 4.7 lakhs were also borne by NFL. In addition to the *ex-gratia* payment, the dependents of NFL employees and trainees received compensation under various benefit schemes of the company which ranged between Rs. 1.7 lakhs to Rs. 4.17 lakhs depending on the ranks and pay drawn. The families of contractor's employees who died in the accident were also paid compensation ranging between Rs. 1.08 lakhs to Rs. 1.13 lakhs per deceased. The total compensation paid by the company is Rs. 22.79 lakhs including *ex-gratia* payment. In addition, the company is also endeavouring to give employment to one of the dependents of the deceased persons.

The report of the enquiry committee has been accepted by the Board of NFL and a number of suggested measures have already been implemented by the company. The highlights of the enquiry report and of the remedial measures suggested in it are also being taken to the notice of other manufacturing units using similar equipment so that appropriate preventive action is taken.

Distribution of surplus land to the Landless

*46. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA:
DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether distribution of surplus land in the country has been very tardy;

(b) if so, the total area of land acquired by Government till now and distributed to the landless and agricultural labour, together with their number as on 31st October, 1992;

(c) the total area of land at present available for distribution;